



BOOKS



SECTION EIGHT

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THE LAST MESSAGE OF VISCOUNT BRYCE

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS. By the Right Honorable Viscount James Bryce. The Macmillan Company.

THE title of the last book with which James Bryce enriched the world is "International Relations," and that title is a correct description of its contents. Not international relations in the somewhat narrow sense which the war and its aftermath have caused the phrase to represent in the public mind, but in the deepest and widest meaning. This is not a volume which rests upon the great conflict for its value and interest. The war is better understood for the reading of Bryce's book; but, besides explaining this war, it explains all the wars which have been and all the wars that will be. It is not a book of surprises, for it is made up of the Williamstown lectures, revised, expanded and joined. But it is a book of clarity, sanity and fairness. It is the last view of a very wise, very sensible statesman, taken just before he passed from the scene which had absorbed his whole life—a scene which no other modern eye has better grasped in its entirety. For Bryce knew the strengths and weaknesses of all the two billion human creatures that inhabit this interesting and still mysterious planet. He understood the unfeathered biped, individual or grouped, and he sympathized with him. "Every man is a wolf to every other man": so Bryce quotes an ancient Greek. But Bryce knows why we are all wolves and is charitable toward the menagerie. And we listen to his explanation of lupine phenomena all the more eagerly because he is not only a master of history but saw history and made it. He watched not merely the men who have been the headlines since 1914 but their predecessors in the politics of Europe—Cavour, Bismarck, Kosuth and Mazzini, to mention only the stars of Continental Europe. "Had there been no Bismarck and no Mazzini we should have seen today a very different Europe. Had there been Bismarcks and Mazzinis since A. D. 1900 we should have seen a very different Europe today."

II.

What are the things that have made for war or peace between and among nations? One of these, says Viscount Bryce, has almost vanished. It was the influence of family relationships between reigning dynasties. The houses of Hapsburg, Wittelsbach, Hohenzollern, Romanoff, Bourbon, Braganza—their ambitions swayed Europe from the time of Charles V. to the summer of 1914. "A slight offered to one of these houses by the other might be enough to provoke a conflict; a marriage might lead to a settlement of a war which had caused the death of thousands of soldiers. All these things have now passed away."

The fact, says Bryce, that Nicholas II., George V. and William II. were cousins did not delay by an hour the two declarations of war, for the last trace of English royal influence in Germany passed with the death of Queen Victoria, for whom the Kaiser "had a profound respect, treasuring everything about her with extraordinary veneration."

The second influence for war or peace—religion—has lost much of

its old power. "No Protestant nation now cares whether it allies itself with a Roman Catholic or a Protestant nation; and the converse is almost equally true of the Roman Catholic nations." Not that religion has disappeared from European politics, but "it is within, rather than between, countries that religious passions still accentuate political contests." France, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Austria have their clerical parties. In Jugo-Slavia we find on one side the orthodox populations of Slavia, Montenegro and Bosnia, and on the other side the Catholics of Croatia, Dalmatia and the Slovene regions.

A third influence is nationality, a force newer than a royal relationship or religion. It is not parallel with the racial feeling, for two races, as in Belgium, or three, as in Switzerland, may have national unity. What is, then, a nationality? Viscount Bryce gives us a clear and simple definition: "Let us begin by regarding a nationality as an aggregate of men drawn together by certain sentiments. The chief among them are racial sentiment and religious sentiment, but there is also that sense of community which is created by the use of a common language, the possession of a common literature, the recollection of common achievements or sufferings in the past, the existence of common customs and habits of thought, common ideals and aspirations."

It is not necessary for all these elements to be present, but "the more of these links exist in any given case the stronger the sentiment of unity." Switzerland has no common language, Hungary no common religion, Scotland no common race. "The sentiment of nationality," says Bryce in a shorter but equally valuable definition, "is

that feeling or group of feelings which makes an aggregate of men conscious of ties, not being either wholly political or religious, which unite them in a community which is, actually or potentially, a nation."

The Magyars are united in a national feeling which rises from the ancient conflict with the Turks and the Hapsburgs. The Armenians' nationality has been preserved by their church. The nationalist sentiment of the Lithuanians, Letts and Estonians springs from their

terring any part of its territory." The white race, says Bryce, have used both doctrines as each suited their convenience. The right of absolute exclusion is supported by the arguments of friction and the perils of intermarriage. "If the problem should ever become acute it may have to be solved by a public opinion of the world—a public opinion which does not now exist but which ought to exist—and solved with a view to that benefit of mankind as a whole which has not yet been recognized as a paramount aim."

There is one of the rare instances where Bryce is a theorist. He would like to see the creation of that ideal international public opinion. But the guns usually do the arguing in disputes of this nature.

Now for the things which tend to keep the peace among the nations. "What of friendship?" asks Bryce. "We are apt to personify nations and talk of them as we do of individual men. Where each of two persons benefit by or find pleasure in the society of the other there will be friendliness." So, says Bryce, in nations "a sense of common interest has often produced more or less of good will." Athens and Plataea were united by the ties of friendship between their individual citizens and by the fact that Athens found in Thebes, in medieval Italy there was the Florentine affection for the French. In the sixteenth century the Scots loved France, largely because of a common enmity against England. Such alliances disappear; witness the wretched friendships of Germany for Russia, Italy and Austria in turn. "Interest," says Bryce, "is no sure basis for international friendship."

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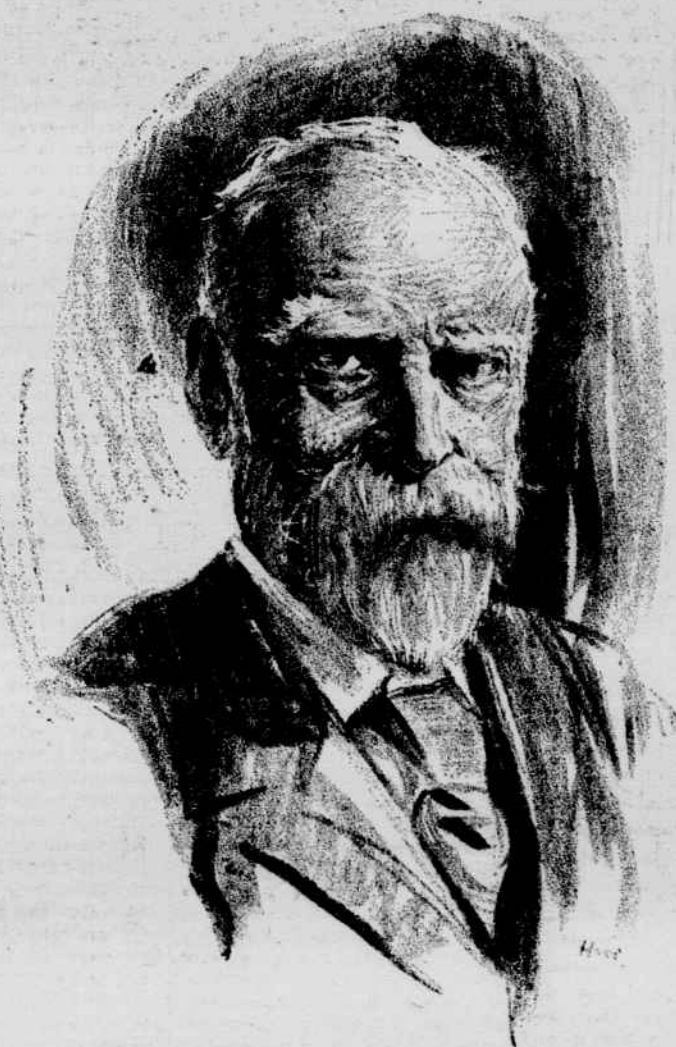
lence. "Nobody ever heard of a nation whose virtues made other nations love it." But Bryce qualifies this cynical aphorism by adding that "an exceptionally noble figure appearing in one nation may be so honored and loved in another as to make it feel more tenderly toward the people whence that figure has come. He cites the examples of Goethe and Beethoven, Dante and Mazzini, Washington and Lincoln. Hatred between nations is not so very easy to engender. The peoples of England and France did not hate each other, even when their Kings were at war. The Prussians did not hate the French until Napoleon exhibited harshness after Jena. The French did not hate the Germans until 1871, when Alsace changed hands. Bryce compares international dislike, so far as it affects the people themselves, as a frost which does not chill the earth deeply. "It is only when a sort of fierce tribal spirit lingers, as in some parts of southeastern Europe and western Asia, that one can speak of international animosities as affecting the peoples."

In the Middle Ages religion and its twin, education, had much to do with preserving international amity. Science and learning, says Bryce, ought always to draw men of different nations together in one body pursuing the same ideals. "But in this respect Europe has gone backward rather than forward since the Middle Ages. The sentiments of national rivalry and jealousy were then comparatively feeble among the aristocracies and the burghers, and practically nonexistent among the common folks, while the church was a potent influence in keeping the people together and inspiring a sense of religious unity which rose above all distinctions of race and speech." Great religious orders, such as those of St. Benedict, St. Dominic and St. Francis "played in the medieval Christian commonwealth a part which may be compared with the nervous system in the human body, serving the whole of it by transmitting both perceptions and impulses to action. The monastic orders and the universities belonged to all countries as well as to their own. "Students of law went to Bologna, students of medicine to Salerno, students of magic to Padua, students of logic and theology to Paris and Oxford." When Louis IV. of Germany had a dispute with the church the Pope was championed by an Italian scholar, Marsilius of Padua; a Frenchman, John of Jandun, and an Englishman, William of Ockham. "This sense of unity," says Bryce, "was unhappily lost in the storms of the Reformation."

III.

Of course peoples would like one another better if they were better acquainted. Bryce, who saw most of the world, says that he was never in any country where he did not find that the average men and women were "pretty kindly and likeable, up to the level of my own countrymen." And yet nations dislike one another. That, says the veteran traveler, is because of Governments and politicians. Governments come together, "not to exchange expressions of regard but to discuss differences, and differences do not make for friendship." As for the politicians, Bryce never traveled in any country in which he did not hear his private acquaintances say, "Don't judge us by our politicians."

An important factor in interna-



The Right Honorable Viscount James Bryce.

new sense of independence. The Jews had ceased to be more than a religious community until the rise of the Zionist movement.

Viscount Bryce ends his chapter on nationalism with a discussion of the great race conflict of color. He places side by side the two contentions: First, "that prima facie every human being has a natural right to migrate from any one part of the world to any other"; second, "that each State is at all times free to exclude any foreigners from en-

her neighbor an outpost against Thebes. In medieval Italy there was the Florentine affection for the French. In the sixteenth century the Scots loved France, largely because of a common enmity against England. Such alliances disappear; witness the wretched friendships of Germany for Russia, Italy and Austria in turn. "Interest," says Bryce, "is no sure basis for international friendship."

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

The Last Message of Viscount Bryce.	As the Ancients Saw the Old World.....	7
A Survey by Frank O'Brien.....	A New World Much Involved.....	7
Concerning the Craft of Fiction.....	Chronicle and Comment.....	8
The Hawaii of the Jack Londons, by Frederick O'Brien, author of "White Shadows in the South Seas".....	Authors' Works and Their Ways.....	8
Tihoti's Tahiti.....	The World of Letters as Others See It.....	9
The Old America Passes, by Hamlin Garland.	The Book Factory.....	9
Life's Tragic Sense.	New Fiction in Varied Forms.....	10-11
A Review by George H. Casamajor.....	Fabre's "Life of the Weevil".....	12
The Whispering Gallery, by Donald Adams..	Books in the Religious Field.....	13
Thirty Days in London, by George H. Doran.	Correspondence—Books of the Week.....	15
	A Year of the Bookman, by John Farrar.....	16